



## State of Connecticut

### HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

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### **PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING MARCH 20, 2019**

### **TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF HOUSE BILL 7192: AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL AND REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND EFFICIENCIES**

Co-chairs Senator Cassano and Representative McCarthy Vahey; Ranking Members Senator Champagne and Representative Zawistowski; and distinguished members of the Planning and Development Committee.

I submit this testimony in opposition to Sections seven through ten of House Bill 7192: *An Act Concerning Municipal and Regional Opportunities and Efficiencies*. I represent the 17<sup>th</sup> House District, Canton and Avon. I am also the former First Selectman of the Town of Canton, as well as the former Board of Education Chairman.

These sections are a duplication of sections one through four of Senate Bill 874 (An Act Concerning Education Initiatives and Services in Connecticut). These sections call for the formation of a Commission on Shared School Services which is tasked with "developing a plan for the redistricting or consolidation of school services and school districts" (lines 444-447). The composition of this Commission is troubling for the simple fact that of the seventeen members, it does require the appointment of a single member who was elected to a Board of Education. In fact, other than the requirement that one member be a Chief Elected Official of a municipality, this commission could be entirely devoid of members who were elected by constituents to serve in any capacity.

Beyond the composition of the Commission, I also object to its goals of a one size fits all approach to forced consolidation of school districts. School districts and municipalities can and should work to find efficiencies that can develop through shared resources. True incentives, not penalties masquerading as incentives, should be developed to assist both towns and school districts and break down barriers to cooperation. Small districts like the ones I represent have many examples of cooperation. Canton Public Schools joined with the Town of Canton to form a combined finance department, which has brought improved service and cost savings to both the town and schools. Canton also shares special education transportation with other towns, entered into a regional food service program with two other towns, and utilizes cooperative purchasing, among other regional initiatives. These are examples of shared services that can be developed; with further incentives, districts could do even more.

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Most concerning about this bill, and the other similar bills that have been heard by the Education Committee, is the fact that there is no mention of improving educational outcomes. The sole driver behind these proposals is anticipated, but undemonstrated, cost savings. Regionalization will necessarily break down the important communication and involvement by parents with their students' schools, which will in turn only have a negative impact on student outcomes. The legislature should concern itself with helping towns and districts work together to find savings through cooperative effort that also reflects their educational priorities. House Bill 7192 only serves to frustrate this goal.

I respectfully urge you to reject House Bill 7192.

Leslee B. Hill  
*State Representative 17<sup>th</sup> District*  
*Proudly serving Canton and Avon*